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Production Products Still Going Strong After All These Years

ST. LOUIS -- Production Products is a product of the inner city. Barry Corona, president, started Production Products, a small minority-owned manufacturer of Chem-Bio threat products, composite structures, electronic components and textile products for commercial and military customers, in 1978 with an initial investment of \$1500 in a 500 square foot rented facility in St. Louis' inner city. Throughout his 27 years of being an entrepreneur, he has hired and developed a workforce comprised of people from the welfare roles who became highly skilled workers. His company is an excellent example of what the disadvantaged workforce can accomplish if they are given the training and opportunity to excel.

In 1984, Production Products was accepted in the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program. Through the 8(a) program, SBA helps small disadvantaged business access the federal contracting market place. After struggling during the first four years from a lack of sound internal business systems, the 8(a) program was the turning point for Production Products.

"One of the main benefits of the 8(a) program was the access to business system training," said Corona. "Through 8(a), we were able to upgrade all internal business controls and gain access to numerous training programs. As a result, we became more efficient and our quality improved." These changes resulted in increased business and customer recognition. The company has won over 25 major awards including: 2000 Army Research Lab US Award for Research on Fiber Composite Armor, 1996 Department of Commerce Minority Manufacturer of

the Year in the United States, 1996 Tibbits US Award for exceptional performance on Fiber Composite Armor (SBIR), 1992 Department of Defense Minority Contractor of the Year in the United States, and 1991 SBA Minority Small Business Person of the Year in Region VII, and 1991 Outstanding Achievement Award for Desert Storm.

“We currently own and operate four manufacturing plants in Missouri totaling 359,000 square feet,” said Corona. “We have the capacity to meet our customers’ demands as well as surge capacity. Our four plants are the home to our highly experienced management, engineering, and production staff, whose track record for performance and exceeding customer expectations is unparalleled.”

Production Products has graduated from the 8(a) program, but is now HUBZone certified by the SBA. A HUBZone is a historically underutilized business zone and the program provides contracting benefits to small businesses located in those areas.

For more information about the HUBZone program, visit www.sba.gov/hubzone. Small businesses can register for the program online.

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